

A new race of Pectoral-patch Cisticola from Cameroun

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During a scientific journey which took us from Tchad to Gabon, we had the opportunity in October 1972 to traverse the montane area of Adamaoua in central Cameroun. On 17th October, in the area of the Mbangi mountains (see Plate 90 in Bartholomew 1956), at 40 km north of Ngaoundere (ca. $7^{\circ}45'N$, $13^{\circ}25'E$) and altitude 1,400 m, we discovered a population of the Pectoral-patch Cisticola *Cisticola brunnescens* Heuglin on a plateau covered with meadows consisting of very short grass on stony ground, and strewn with strands of small area of bushes, relatively little crowded, meagre and low (height 0.80 to 1 m). This bushy vegetation was more luxurious in hollows and drainage lines, developing into shrubs (height 2 to 3 m).

The Pectoral-patch Cisticolas were frequenting the low tufts and thinly scattered bushes on the edges of the meadows. This habitat differed from that known to one of us (C.E.) in Ethiopia, where *brunnescens* inhabits humid meadows with grass of a height of 0.30 to 1 m. It would seem that in this Adamaoua locality, the grass being so short, the birds were associated rather

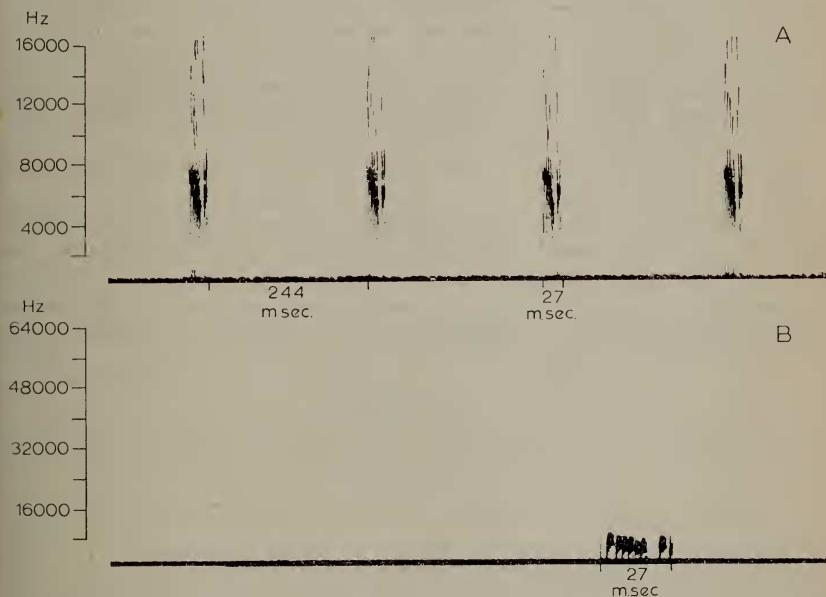


Figure 1. Song in flight of *Cisticola brunnescens mbangensis*. A: Sonogram on standard scale, 160 - 16000 Hz. B: The same reduced to quarter speed of A to show distribution of energy in band 5000 - 7000 Hz. (Sonograms made with wide band-path filter).

with the bushy formations. It may be noted that in the highlands of Bamenda ($5^{\circ}55'N$, $10^{\circ}10'E$), in ex-British Cameroun (now part of Nigeria), where the form *C. b. lynesi* Bates occurs, the species inhabits (according to the labels of

specimens in the British Museum, collectors Admiral H. Lynes and the Rev. Dr. W. Serle), certainly "moorland" and "open grassy flats" but also "bare hills with small shrubs and no new grass yet", this latter biotope resembling that in which we found it. The males were singing, at intervals from one another of 100 to 150 m. The song—apparently like that of the nominate race of the Ethiopian plateaus—was performed either in flight (the most usual) or from the top of a small bush: see sonagrams in Fig. 1. In this habitat, *Macronyx croceus* and *Galerida* (= *Heliocorys*) *modesta* were common; *Myrmecocichla nigra* and *Francolinus bicalcaratus* were seen; while in the neighbouring zone of high bushes the dominant species were *Prinia subflava*, *Cisticola brachyptera*, *C. natalensis*, *Nectarinia cuprea*, *Tchagra senegala* and *Serinus mozambicus*.

Three males collected (at the finish of reproductive activity: testes 3 mm long) have been compared with the important material in the British Museum at Tring. It appears that this population of *Adamaoua* is sufficiently distinct from the other races of the species to require a name. So we propose:

Cisticola brunnescens mbangensis, subsp. nov.

Description: Our specimens are in very worn nuptial plumage, but nevertheless are at once distinguishable from the other races in the same plumage. They resemble most closely *lynesi* Bates of the highlands of Bamenda, the only area not far from Cameroun where the species is so far known (White 1962: 683). They differ in their smaller size: see measurements below. The general coloration is lighter. The streaking of the upperparts is less intense, these markings being narrower and in particular more brownish, less blackish. The crown is more rusty, not hazel. The rump contrasts with the mantle and is a bright and dark rusty maroon, lacking the yellowish tone of *lynesi*. Although very worn, the edges of the feathers of the mantle and the wing-coverts appear more yellowish, less reddish.

Distribution: So far only known from the type locality in the highlands of *Adamaoua*, Cameroun.

Type: ♂ adult, *Adamaoua*, 17th October 1972, collected by the authors, their no. 22. In Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris (wing 50, tail 25.5, bill from skull 10 mm).

Measurements: The following are comparative measurements of the new race and eight males in breeding dress from the highlands of Bamenda:

	Wing	Tail	Bill from skull
	<i>C. b. lynesi</i>		
8 ♂♂	51 - 54 (52.4)	26 - 31 (28.9)	11 - 11.5 (11.2)
	<i>C. b. mbangensis</i>		
3 ♂♂	49 - 50 (49.5)	24 - 26 (25.1)	10 - 10.5 (10.1)

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